

To the Members of the California State Assembly:

I am signing Assembly Bill 2248 to require the Department of Health Services (DHS) to create a Parkinson's disease registry and conduct a program of epidemiological assessments on the incidence of the disease.

Parkinson's disease is a slowly progressive neuro-degenerative disorder that effects between 40,000 and 110,000 Californians. This disease has touched the lives of countless more residents whose friends and loved ones have suffered from this debilitating disease. Data collection on the disease has the potential to assist scientists in identifying the possible causes of Parkinson's disease.

Parkinson's disease is generally diagnosed based on clinical symptoms, rather than laboratory or radiological tests. Until there is a specific test to diagnose Parkinson's disease, inconsistent reporting may occur. Therefore, it is particularly important that the reporting system developed use a scientifically sound model of reporting data that will capture all of the cases. I am directing the DHS to work with scientists, medical professionals and advocacy and patient groups to develop an appropriate model to ensure the most accurate reporting of Parkinson's disease.

Given the time required to solicit and retain funds sufficient to develop and maintain the registry, it may not be possible to begin the phase in of the Parkinson's disease reporting by January 1, 2005. There is also concern that the submission of implementation and funding schedules to the Legislature by the July 1, 2005 deadline will be difficult to meet.

I am directing the DHS to work with the author on additional clarifying legislation that would ensure the Parkinson's registry is sustainable, uses a scientifically sound model, and to extend the timelines as necessary to ensure resource needs and the operational requirements can be met.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger